

This motion is based on this Notice of Motion and Motion, the Memorandum of Points and Authorities in support thereof, all filings in this litigation, and such other argument as may be presented to the Court.

Date: July 28, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

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**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN
SOUTHERN DIVISION**

IN RE AUTOMOTIVE PARTS
ANTITRUST LITIGATION

: Master File No. 12-md-02311
: Judge Marianne O. Battani
: Magistrate Judge Mona K. Majzoub

IN RE BEARINGS
IN RE ELECTRONIC POWERED
STEERING ASSEMBLIES

: Case No. 2:12-cv-00503
: Case No. 2:13-cv-01903

THIS DOCUMENT RELATES TO

End-Payor Actions

**MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF END-PAYOR PLAINTIFFS’
MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF PROPOSED SETTLEMENT
WITH DEFENDANT NSK AND
PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION OF SETTLEMENT CLASSES**

STATEMENT OF ISSUES PRESENTED

1. Whether End-Payor Plaintiffs' ("EPPs") settlement with Defendants NSK Ltd., NSK Americas, Inc., NSK Steering Systems Co., Ltd. and NSK Steering Systems America, Inc. (together, "NSK" or the "Defendant NSK"), embodied in the Settlement Agreement entered into on July 21, 2016 ("Settlement Agreement") and attached hereto as Exhibit 1, is fair, reasonable, and adequate, and should be preliminarily approved;
2. Whether the Court should provisionally certify the Settlement Classes under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure ("Rule") 23(a) and (b)(3);
3. Whether the Court should stay the proceedings by the EPPs against Defendant NSK in accordance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement; and
4. Whether the Court should appoint Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel for the EPPs as Settlement Class Counsel for this settlement.¹

¹ Unless otherwise defined, capitalized terms shall have the meaning ascribed to them in the Settlement Agreement.

CONTROLLING OR MOST APPROPRIATE AUTHORITIES

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In re Packaged Ice Antitrust Litig., 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255 (E.D. Mich. Feb. 22, 2011)

In re Scrap Metal Antitrust Litig., 527 F.3d 517 (6th Cir. 2008)

In re Whirlpool Corp. Front-Loading Washer Prods. Liab. Litig., 722 F.3d 838 (6th Cir. 2013)

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The End-Payor Plaintiffs (“EPPs”), on behalf of themselves and all others similarly situated, by and through the undersigned Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel, respectfully submit this memorandum in support of their motion seeking preliminary approval of a settlement with NSK as defined below, and provisional certification of the proposed Settlement Classes in the above-entitled actions.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

Automotive parts, including Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies, are among the parts at issue in these coordinated multi-district proceedings, *In re Automotive Parts Antitrust Litigation* (“Auto Parts”), MDL No. 2311. For the purpose of the proposed settlement, the automotive parts generally and the various automotive parts that are the subject of the above-entitled actions are defined as follows:

“**Automotive Parts**” means any part or part assembly designed for installation in any four-wheeled passenger automobile, van, sports utility vehicle, crossover, or pick-up truck as defined in Paragraph 12 of the Proposed Consolidated Amended Complaint, Case No. 2:13-cv-703 (Dec. 18, 2015), ECF No. 57-1 and includes Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies.

“**Bearings**” has the meaning of that term as used in Paragraph 3 of the Second Consolidated Amended Class Action Complaint, Case No. 2:12-cv-503 (August 4, 2015), ECF No. 122.

The Bearings Defendants include: JTEKT Corporation, JTEKT Automotive North America, Inc. (together, “JTEKT”); Nachi-Fujikoshi Corp., Nachi America Inc. (together, “Nachi”); NSK Ltd., NSK Americas, Inc. (together, “NSK”); NTN Corporation, NTN USA Corporation (together, “NTN”); Schaeffler Group USA Inc.; SKF USA, Inc.

“Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies” has the meaning of that phrase as used in Paragraph 3 of the Consolidated Second Amended Class Action Complaint, Case No. 2:13-cv-1902 (Oct. 26, 2015), ECF No. 88.

The Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies Defendants include: JTEKT Corporation, JTEKT Automotive North America, Inc. (together, “JTEKT”); Showa Corporation, American Showa, Inc. (together, “Showa”); Mitsubishi Electric Corporation, Mitsubishi Electric US Holdings, Inc., Mitsubishi Electric Automotive America, Inc. (together, “Mitsubishi”); Mitsuba Corporation; American Mitsuba Corporation (together, “Mitsuba”); NSK Ltd., NSK Steering Systems Co., Ltd., NSK Americas, Inc., NSK Steering Systems America, Inc. (together, “NSK”); Yamada Manufacturing Co., Ltd., Yamada North America, Inc. (together, “Yamada”); and other unnamed co-conspirators.

These actions arise from an alleged conspiracy or set of closely interrelated conspiracies by and among the automotive industry’s largest manufacturers, marketers, and sellers of automotive parts to fix prices, rig bids, and allocate the market and customers in the United States for the sale of such products.

EPPs filed the first class action complaints involving Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies (collectively, the “Complaints”) against the foregoing Defendants between June 18, 2012 and October 1, 2013. EPPs’ various complaints involving Auto Parts were each centralized for coordinated pretrial purposes. The Court also appointed the undersigned firms as Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel and Interim Liaison Counsel for the End-Payor Actions in the Master Docket for MDL No. 2311. *See id.*, citing Master File No. 2:12-md-2311, Case No. 2:12-cv-00100 (Aug. 7, 2012, ECF No. 271). From the inception of these cases, Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel have represented the interests of the classes of EPPs, including overseeing and directing

the prosecution and settlement of the claims brought against NSK. This proposed settlement is a result of those efforts.

EPPs allege that, in furtherance of the alleged conspiracy or conspiracies, Defendants agreed, during meetings and conversations, to unlawfully fix, artificially raise, maintain and/or stabilize prices, rig bids for, and allocate the supply of Automotive Parts, including Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies and then sold those products at supracompetitive prices to automobile manufacturers in the United States and elsewhere. *See, e.g.*, EPPs' Consolidated Amended Complaint in *In re Fuel Injection Systems* ¶¶ 1, 120.

The settlement between the EPPs and NSK is meaningful and substantial and will result in a payment of US\$26,220,000.00 for the benefit of the EPP Classes, a very significant achievement in this litigation. US\$22,420,000.00 will be allocated to the Bearings case, and US \$3,800,000.00 will be allocated to the *Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies* case. Standing alone, the monetary recovery from NSK is remarkable, but the settlement is also valuable to the EPPs in that it requires NSK to provide comprehensive discovery cooperation in the form of, *inter alia*, attorney proffers, interviews with and depositions of witnesses, and the production of certain documents (including transactional data), related to the claims asserted in these cases. Furthermore, NSK is the first settlor in the *Bearings* case, and therefore its cooperation in that case is especially valuable. The ability to obtain such assistance without protracted and expensive discovery is extremely valuable to the EPPs. NSK's cooperation agreement will greatly enhance the EPPs' ability to prosecute their claims against the remaining non-settling Defendants. It should also be noted that in the *Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies* case NSK is the amnesty applicant, and thus would be able to claim that it is only subject to non-trebled damages based on its own sales rather than joint

and several liability and trebled damages. This fact reduces the potential recovery against NSK should EPPs proceed to trial against NSK in the Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies case.

Additionally, NSK's sales will remain in the case for purposes of computing the treble damages claim against the non-settling Defendants in accordance with governing law and shall be part of any joint and several liability claims against other current or future defendants. *See* Settlement Agreement ¶ 62. The EPPs and the members of the proposed Settlement Classes will retain their ability to recover from the remaining Defendants the entire amount of damages caused by the alleged conspiracies, even those attributable to NSK, less only the amount paid by NSK in settlement.

EPPs and their Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel believe, for all the reasons set forth, that the settlement with NSK is in the best interest of the proposed Settlement Classes and merits the Court's preliminary approval. EPPs therefore request the entry of an Order:

1. Preliminarily approving the settlement;
2. Provisionally certifying the proposed Settlement Classes;
3. Staying the proceedings against NSK in accordance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement; and
4. Appointing Interim Co-Lead Class counsel for EPPs as Settlement Class Counsel for this settlement.

THE BASIC TERMS AND BACKGROUND OF THE SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

The Settlement Agreement with NSK arises from extensive arm's length and good faith negotiations. The EPPs' counsel participated in intensive fact-gathering sessions and informational meetings, as well as extensive negotiations that took place over the course of a year through telephone calls, in-person meetings and other communications.

Settlement Classes: The Settlement Agreement defines the Settlement Classes in the various actions as follows:

a. “Bearings Settlement Class” is defined as:

All persons and entities who, from January 1, 2000, through the Execution Date, purchased or leased a new Vehicle in the United States not for resale that included one or more Bearings as a component part, or indirectly purchased one or more Bearings as a replacement part, which were manufactured or sold by a Defendant, any current or former subsidiary of a Defendant, or any co-conspirator of a Defendant. Excluded from the Bearings Settlement Class are Defendants, their parent companies, subsidiaries and affiliates, any co-conspirators, federal governmental entities and instrumentalities of the federal government, states and their subdivisions, agencies and instrumentalities, and persons who purchased Bearings directly or for resale.

b. “Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies Settlement Class” is defined as:

All persons and entities who, from January 1, 2005, through the Execution Date, purchased or leased a new Vehicle in the United States not for resale that included one or more Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies as a component part, or indirectly purchased one or more Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies as a replacement part, which were manufactured or sold by a Defendant, any current or former subsidiary of a Defendant, or any co-conspirator of a Defendant. Excluded from the Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies Settlement Class are Defendants, their parent companies, subsidiaries and affiliates, any coconspirators, federal governmental entities and instrumentalities of the federal government, states and their subdivisions, agencies and instrumentalities, and persons who purchased Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies directly or for resale.

Settlement Agreement, ¶ 13.

“Vehicle,” as used in these class definitions, is limited to four-wheeled passenger automobiles, vans, sports utility vehicles, crossovers, and pick-up trucks.

Settlement Amount: NSK has agreed to pay US\$26,220,000.00 by wiring such funds to one or more escrow accounts (“Escrow Account(s)”) established at Wells Fargo & Company within thirty (30) days following entry the later of (i) entry of an order preliminarily approving this Agreement by the Court, or (b) NSK being provided with the account number, account name, and wiring information for the Escrow Accounts. *Id.* ¶ 24.

Cooperation: NSK agreed to provide extensive cooperation to the EPPs that will significantly aid in their prosecution of claims against the remaining Defendants. A general summary of NSK's cooperation obligations is provided below. The terms of this cooperation agreement are set forth in fuller detail in Section K (¶¶ 45-54) of the Settlement Agreement. NSK's obligation to cooperate includes, among many other things, the duty to provide:

46. Identity of Individuals. NSK will provide Settlement Class Counsel with the identity of all current and former employees, directors and officers of NSK who: (1) were interviewed by the DOJ, JFTC, or EU in connection with alleged anticompetitive activity; or (2) appeared before the grand jury in the DOJ investigation of the Bearings and/or Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies conspiracy.

47. Documents. NSK will produce all potentially relevant Documents ("Relevant Documents") to the End-Payor Plaintiffs. As to Documents in their possession, custody, or control that are not Relevant Documents, NSK will consider in good faith any reasonable request by End-Payor Plaintiffs to produce such Documents, provided the request would not impose an undue burden on NSK. Such Relevant Documents include: (1) documents in the files of their custodians and in central files responsive to interrogatories and requests for production of documents served on it before the Execution Date of this Agreement; (2) documents concerning its determination of its prices for Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies sold in the United States and/or for use in Vehicles to be sold in the United States; (3) documents showing how employees were trained or instructed to bid and set prices for Bearings or Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies in the United States and/or for use in Vehicles to be sold in the United States; and (4) documents relating to issued requests for quotation ("RFQ"), bids submitted in response to RFQs, RFQ award notifications, and post-award price adjustments in the United States and/or for Bearings or Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies for use in Vehicles to be sold in the United States. All currently pending discovery requests will be withdrawn, and no further discovery will be sought from any NSK entity other than as provided for in this Agreement.

47. Transactional Data. At the request of End-Payor Plaintiffs and subject to meet and confer with NSK as to any reasonable limitations on this obligation, including in particular previous productions made by NSK that may partially or fully satisfy End-Payor Plaintiffs' requirements, NSK will produce pre-existing transactional data related to Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies. This production will be made within sixty (60) days of the End-Payor Plaintiffs' request, or within sixty (60) days of the conclusion of any related meet and confer discussions regarding limitations on the production, whichever is later. The time period for this production will be from January 1, 1998 to a date no later than two years after the execution date of this Agreement for Bearings and from January 1, 2003 to a date no later than two years after the execution date of this Agreement for

Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies. The precise end-date for this production obligation will be agreed upon by the parties in subsequent meet and confer discussions, taking into account NSK's burden of producing the transactional data and the End-Payor Plaintiffs' need for that data.

48. Attorney Proffers and Witness Interviews. Additionally, NSK shall use its best efforts to cooperate with Settlement Class Counsel.

(a) NSK's counsel will make themselves available at a mutually agreed location in the United States for up to four meetings of one business day each to provide an attorney's proffer of facts known to them. NSK further agrees to make five (5) persons available for interviews and depositions, provide five (5) declarations or affidavits from the same persons, and make those persons available to testify at trial. The deposition shall be conducted at a mutually agreed-upon location, and shall be limited to a total of seven (7) hours over one (1) day unless the deposition is in a language other than English, in which case the deposition shall be limited to a total of thirteen (13) hours over two (2) days.

(b) In addition to its Cooperation obligations set forth herein, at the request of End-Payor Plaintiffs and subject to agreement with NSK, NSK agrees to produce through affidavit(s) or declaration(s) and/or at trial, in Settlement Classes counsel's discretion, representatives qualified to authenticate, establish as business records, or otherwise establish any other necessary foundation for admission into evidence of any documents or transactional data produced or to be produced by NSK. Settlement Classes counsel agree to use their best efforts to obtain stipulations that would avoid the need to call NSK witnesses at trial for the purpose of obtaining such evidentiary foundations.

(c) In addition, after conducting a reasonable search, NSK shall, to the best of its knowledge, identify those Vehicles sold in the United States from 2000 through the Execution Date that contain Bearings and those Vehicles sold in the United States from 2005 through the Execution Date that contain Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies sold by NSK.

(*Id.* at ¶¶ 46-49.)

Released Claims: The Settlement Agreement releases only NSK (and their respective past and present, direct and indirect, parents, subsidiaries, associates, and affiliates, including but not limited to the predecessors, successors and assigns of each of the above; and each and all of the present and former principals, partners, officers, directors, supervisors, employees, agents, stockholders, members, representatives, insurers, attorneys, heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns of each of the foregoing) from all Settlement Class Member claims arising out of or relating

in any way to any conduct alleged in the Complaints,² the Proposed Consolidated Amended Complaint, or any act or omission of NSK, concerning the parts subject to those actions. *See* Settlement Agreement ¶ 9.

The release does not include (1) any claims made by direct purchasers of Released Parts; (2) any claims made by automobile dealerships that are indirect purchasers of Released Parts in the MDL Proceeding; (3) any claims made by any State, State agency, or instrumentality or political subdivision of a State, as to government purchases and/or penalties relating to Released Parts; (4) claims involving any negligence, personal injury, breach of contract, bailment, failure to deliver lost goods, damaged or delayed goods, product defect, warranty, securities, or similar claim relating to Released Parts; (5) claims concerning any product other than Released Parts; (6) claims under laws other than those of the United States relating to purchases of Released Parts made outside of the United States; and (7) damage claims under the state or local laws of any jurisdiction other than an Indirect Purchaser State. *Id.* ¶ 22. The Settlement Agreement also provides that NSK's sales shall remain in the continuing litigation against the non-settling Defendants, who remain jointly and severally liable for all damages caused by the conspiracies. *Id.* ¶ 62.

ARGUMENT

The Settlement Agreement is not only fair, reasonable, and adequate—resulting from extensive arm's length negotiations by experienced counsel—but also a thoughtfully conceived

² “Complaints” means each of the following: (a) Second Consolidated Amended Class Action Complaint, Case No. 2:12-cv-503 (August 4, 2015), ECF No. 122; (b) the Second Amended Consolidated Class Action Complaint, Case No. 2:13-cv-1903 (Oct. 2, 2015), ECF No. 84 (Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies). “Proposed Consolidated Amended Complaint” means the [Proposed] Consolidated Amended Class Action Complaint, Case No. 2:13-cv-703 (Dec. 18, 2015), ECF No. 57-1 (Automotive Parts).

resolution of the proposed Settlement Classes' claims that maximizes their recovery and guarantees early, significant cooperation by NSK in the continued prosecution of EPPs' claims.

I. Preliminary Approval Should be Granted Because the Proposed Settlement Falls Well Within the Range of Possible Approval.

It is well-established in the Sixth Circuit that there is an overriding public interest in settling and quieting litigation, particularly class actions. *See Griffin v. Flagstar Bancorp, Inc.*, Case No. 2:10-cv-10610, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 173702, at *6 (E.D. Mich. Dec. 12, 2013) (*citing UAW v. Gen. Motors Corp.*, 497 F.3d 615, 631 (6th Cir. 2007) (noting “the federal policy favoring settlement of class actions”)); *see also IUE-CWA v. Gen. Motors Corp.*, 238 F.R.D. 583, 593 (E.D. Mich. 2006). “This policy applies with equal force whether the settlement is partial, involving only some of the defendants, or complete.” *In re Packaged Ice Antitrust Litig.*, Case No. 08-MD-01952, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255, at *44 (E.D. Mich. Feb. 22, 2011) (“*Packaged Ice*”); *see also Agretti v. ANR Freight Sys., Inc.*, 982 F.2d 242, 247 (7th Cir. 1992) (“In complex litigation with a plaintiff class, ‘partial settlements often play a vital role in resolving class actions’” (*quoting* MANUAL FOR COMPLEX LITIGATION (SECOND) § 30.46 (1986)). In fact, “settlement should be facilitated at as early a stage of the litigation as possible.” 6A CHARLES ALAN WRIGHT & ARTHUR R. MILLER, FEDERAL PRACTICE AND PROCEDURE § 1522, at 225-26 (2d ed. 1990) (*citing* 1983 Advisory Committee Notes); *see also* MANUAL FOR COMPLEX LITIGATION (FOURTH) § 13.12 (2004) (“*Manual*”) (“[S]ettlement should be explored early in the case.”).

Approval of a proposed class action settlement proceeds in two steps. First, the court grants preliminary approval to the settlement and provisionally certifies a settlement class. Second, after notice of the settlement is provided to the class and the court conducts a fairness hearing, the court may grant final approval to the settlement. *See Manual* § 21.63; *see also Bobbitt v. Acad. of Reporting*, 2009 WL 2168833, at *1 (E.D. Mich. Jul. 21, 2009) (citing authorities).

A proposed settlement agreement should be preliminarily approved if “the preliminary evaluation of the proposed settlement does not disclose grounds to doubt its fairness or other obvious deficiencies . . . and [the settlement] appears to fall within the range of possible approval.” *See also Int’l Union, UAW v. Ford Motor Co.*, Case Nos. 05-74730, 06-10331, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 70471, at *11 (E.D. Mich. July 13, 2006). The district court’s role in reviewing settlements “must be limited to the extent necessary to reach a reasoned judgment that the agreement is not the product of fraud or overreaching by, or collusion between, the negotiating parties, and that the settlement, taken as a whole, is fair, reasonable and adequate to all concerned.” *Clark Equip. Co. v Int’l Union of Allied Industrial Workers of Am.*, 803 F.2d 878, 880 (6th Cir. 1986). Courts adhere to “an initial presumption of fairness when a proposed class settlement, which was negotiated at arm’s length by counsel for the class, is presented for court approval.” 4 HERBERT B. NEWBERG & ALBA CONTE, NEWBERG ON CLASS ACTIONS § 11.41 (4th ed. 2005) (“*Newberg*”) (collecting cases); *cf. Rankin v. Rots*, No. 02-cv-71045, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 45706, at *9 (E.D. Mich. June 28, 2006) (“[T]he only question . . . is whether the settlement, taken as a whole, is so unfair on its face as to preclude judicial approval.”) (internal quotation marks omitted).

In considering whether to grant preliminary approval, the court is not required at this point to make a final determination of the adequacy of the settlement or to delve extensively into the merits of the settlement. *See In re Sulzer Hip Prosthesis & Knee Prosthesis Liab. Litig.*, Case No. 1:01-CV-9000, 2001 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 26714, at *17 (E.D. Ohio Oct. 19, 2001) (“*Sulzer Hip*”). These inquiries are reserved for the final approval stage of the class settlement approval process. Nor will any class member’s substantive rights be prejudiced by preliminary approval because the proposed preliminary approval is solely to provide authority for notifying the class of the terms of the settlement agreement to set the stage for review of its final approval. *Id.*; *Newburg* § 11.25.

Consequently, courts generally engage only in a limited inquiry to determine whether a proposed settlement falls within the range of possible approval and thus should be preliminarily approved. *Sulzer Hip*, 2001 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 26714, at *17-18 (preliminary approval may be based on “informal presentations” because of “substantial judicial processes that remain”) (*quoting* MANUAL FOR COMPLEX LITIGATION (FOURTH) § 21.662 at p. 460 (2004)). *See also In re Packaged Ice Antitrust Litig.*, No. 08-MD-01952, 2010 WL 3070161, at *4 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 2, 2010), *quoting Gautreaux v. Pierce*, 690 F.2d 616, 621 n.3 (7th Cir. 1982) (inquiry limited to settlement’s potential for final approval and propriety of class notice and fairness hearing).

In evaluating whether a settlement is fair, reasonable and adequate, courts in the Sixth Circuit consider a number of factors:

(1) the likelihood of success on the merits weighed against the amount and form of relief in the settlement; (2) the complexity expense and likely duration of the litigation; (3) the opinions of class counsel and class representatives; (4) the amount of discovery engaged in by the parties; (5) the reaction of absent class members; (6) the risk of fraud or collusion; and (7) the public interest. The Court may choose to consider only those factors that are relevant to the settlement at hand and may weigh particular factors according to the demands of the case.

Packaged Ice, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255, at *46-47 (quotation marks and citations omitted).

A court is not required at the preliminary approval stage to determine whether it ultimately will finally approve the settlement. Nevertheless, as set forth in detail below, preliminary consideration of the factors a court considers when evaluating the fairness of a settlement for purposes of deciding whether to grant final approval supports this Court’s granting preliminary approval of the Settlement Agreement.

A. The Settlement Agreement Achieves an Excellent Result for the Proposed Settlement Classes, Particularly Given the Expense, Duration, and Uncertainty of Continued Litigation.

Antitrust class actions are “arguably the most complex action(s) to prosecute. The legal and factual issues involved are always numerous and uncertain in outcome.” *In re Packaged Ice*

Antitrust Litig., Case No. 08-MDL-01952, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 150427, at *76 (E.D. Mich. Dec. 13, 2011) (*quoting Linerboard*, 292 F. Supp. at 639); *see also In re Cardizem CD Antitrust Litig.*, 218 F.R.D. 508, 533 (E.D. Mich. 2003) (“*Cardizem*”) (“Moreover, the complexity of this case cannot be overstated. Antitrust class actions are inherently complex”). Motions have already been vigorously contested, and the discovery process would be all the more complicated due to the unique issues that attend discovery against foreign parties.³ Additionally, NSK would assert various defenses, and a jury trial might well turn on close questions of proof, many of which would be the subject of complicated expert testimony, particularly with regard to damages, making the outcome of such trial uncertain for both parties. *See, e.g., Cardizem*, 218 F.R.D. at 523 (in approving settlement, noting that “the prospect of a trial necessarily involves the risk that Plaintiffs would obtain little or no recovery and that “no matter how confident trial counsel may be, they cannot predict with 100% accuracy a jury’s favorable verdict, particularly in complex antitrust litigation”); *Packaged Ice*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255, at *53-54 (noting the “undeniable inherent risks” in antitrust class action litigation including “whether the class will be certified and upheld on appeal, whether the conspiracies as alleged in the Complaint can be established, whether Plaintiffs will be able to demonstrate class wide antitrust impact and ultimately whether Plaintiffs will be able to prove damages”). *Id.* Given this uncertainty, “[a] very large bird in the hand in this litigation is surely worth more than whatever birds are lurking in the bushes.” *In re Chambers Dev. Sec. Litig.*, 912 F. Supp. 822, 838 (W.D. Pa. 1995).

³ Because Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel may have to litigate against the other Defendants through trial and appeal, their duties to the Classes preclude a more detailed discussion of their potential litigation risks. Instead, Class Counsel here recite the arguments that have been and are expected to be raised by its Defendants.

Moreover, given the stakes involved, an appeal is nearly certain to follow regardless of the outcome at trial. This creates additional risk, as judgments following trial may be overturned on appeal. *See, e.g., In re Farmers Ins. Exchange, Claims Representatives' Overtime Pay Litig.*, 481 F.3d 1119 (9th Cir. 2007) (\$52.5 million class action judgment following trial reversed on appeal); *Robbins v. Koger Props., Inc.*, 116 F.3d 1441 (11th Cir. 1997) (jury verdict of \$81 million for plaintiffs reversed and judgment entered for defendant). And even if class members were willing to assume all of the litigation risks, the passage of time would introduce still more risks in terms of appeals and possible changes in the law that would, in light of the time value of money, make future recoveries less valuable than recovery today. *See In re Warfarin Sodium Antitrust Litig.*, 391 F.3d 516, 536 (3d Cir. 2004) (“[I]t was inevitable that post-trial motions and appeals would not only further prolong the litigation but also reduce the value of any recovery to the class.”); *In re Rent-Way Sec. Litig.*, 305 F. Supp. 2d 491, 501 (W.D. Pa. 2003) (“[A] future recovery, even one in excess of the proposed Settlement, may ultimately prove less valuable to the Classes than receiving the benefits of the proposed Settlement at this time”). Hence, “the certain and immediate benefits to the Class represented by the Settlement outweigh the possibility of obtaining a better result at trial, particularly when factoring in the additional expense and long delay inherent in prosecuting this complex litigation through trial and appeal.” *Cardizem*, 218 F.R.D. at 525.

Against this background, an early settlement providing the substantial benefits afforded here represents an excellent result for the members of the proposed Settlement Classes. NSK’s \$26,220,000.00 payment provides for significant compensation to the proposed Settlement Classes that will be available years earlier than would be the case if litigation against NSK continued through trial and appeal. Settlements of this type, before discovery has been completed, create value beyond their direct pecuniary benefit to the class. *See Packaged Ice*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS

17255, at *50-51 (noting “significant value” of icebreaker settlement); *In re Linerboard Antitrust Litig.*, 292 F. Supp. 2d 631, 643 (E.D. Pa. 2003); *In re Corrugated Container Antitrust Litig.*, 1981 WL 2093 *16 (S.D. Tex. Jan. 27, 1981) (“*Corrugated Container*”).

Of particular importance is the fact that the Settlement Agreement requires NSK to provide substantial discovery cooperation to Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel by providing transactional data, proffers, interviews, documents, among other cooperation. *See* Settlement Agreement § F (¶¶ 44-53). This cooperation agreement is extremely valuable to the classes. The cooperation to be provided by the terms of the Settlement Agreement will afford the EPPs access to transactional data, documents, and witnesses without protracted and expensive discovery—a significant class-wide benefit. *See, e.g., In re Packaged Ice Antitrust Litig.*, Case No. 08-MD-01952, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 77645, at *44 (E.D. Mich. Aug. 2, 2010) (“Particularly where, as here, there is the potential for a significant benefit to the class in the form of cooperation on the part of the settling Defendant, this Court is reluctant to refuse to consider the very preliminary approval that will trigger that cooperation”); *see also Linerboard*, 292 F. Supp. 2d at 643; *Corrugated Container*, 1981 WL 2093, at *16; *cf. In re Pressure Sensitive Labelstock Antitrust Litig.*, 584 F. Supp. 2d 697, 702 (M.D. Pa. 2008) (“[T]he benefit of obtaining the cooperation of the Settling Defendants tends to offset the fact that they would be able to withstand a larger judgment.”).

The value of an early settlement can be so great that early-settling defendants often obtain a substantial discount relative to the remaining defendants. The *Linerboard* court, for example, approved a settlement with the first-settling defendant for less than one percent of sales and approximately one-third of the percentage of sales obtained from the other defendants. *Compare Linerboard*, 292 F. Supp. 2d at 643 (approving icebreaker settlement for approximately 0.4% of sales), with *In re Linerboard Antitrust Litig.*, 321 F. Supp. 2d 619, 633 (E.D. Pa. 2004) (approving

settlements with final two defendants for 1.6% and 2% of sales). In accepting this discounted recovery from the first-settling defendants, the *Linerboard* court emphasized the “substantial” intangible benefit to the class of the icebreaker agreement. 292 F. Supp. 2d at 643.

The Settlement Agreement also specifically provides that it does not alter the non-settling Defendants’ joint and several liability for the full damages caused by the alleged conspiracies, including all sales made by these Defendants. *See* Settlement Agreement ¶ 61. In this regard, the Settlement Agreement is similar to one of the settlements approved in *Corrugated Container*, where the court noted the “valuable provision” under which plaintiffs reserved their right to recover full damages from the remaining defendants, less the actual amount of the initial settlement. 1981 WL 2093, at *17; *see also In re Uranium Antitrust Litig.*, 617 F.2d 1248 (7th Cir. 1980); *In re Ampicillin Antitrust Litig.*, 82 F.R.D. 652, 654 (D.D.C. 1979) (approving settlement where class will “relinquish no part of its potential recovery” due to joint and several liability). Here too, the EPPs will be able to pursue their full damages, with no diminution other than deduction of the actual NSK settlement amount.

B. The Settlement Agreement is the Result of Thorough Arm’s-Length Negotiations Conducted By Highly Experienced Counsel.

The judgment of proposed Settlement Class Counsel that the settlement is in the best interest of the proposed Settlement Class “is entitled to significant weight, and supports the fairness of the class settlement.” *Sheick v. Auto Component Carrier LCC*, Case No. 2:09-cv-14429, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 110411, at *51 (E.D. Mich. Oct. 18, 2010) (quoting *IUE-CWA*, 238 F.R.D. at 597); *see also Cardizem*, 218 F.R.D. at 525. Courts give great weight to the recommendation of experienced counsel for the parties in evaluating the adequacy of a settlement.

“Preliminary approval of a proposed settlement is based upon the court’s familiarity with the issues and evidence, as well as the arms-length nature of the negotiations prior to the proposed

settlement, ensuring that the proposed settlement is not illegal or collusive.” *Thacker v. Chesapeake Appalachia, L.L.C.*, 259 F.R.D. 262 (E.D. Ky. 2009) (quoting *In re Dun & Bradstreet Credit Servs. Customer Litig.*, 130 F.R.D. 366, 370 (S.D. Ohio 1990)). The Settlement Agreement here is the result of lengthy and hard-fought negotiations between counsel experienced in complex antitrust and consumer class action litigation. The settlement was negotiated for many months by Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel in a process that involved multiple discussions with counsel for NSK, including in-person meetings. Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel undertook a diligent and thorough investigation of the legal and factual issues posed by this litigation and consulted extensively with experienced economists before negotiating this deal.

Counsel for the EPPs was well-informed about the facts and the strength of the claims asserted when the terms of the Settlement Agreement were negotiated. *See Packaged Ice*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255, at *56 (“[T]he absence of formal discovery is not an obstacle [to settlement approval] so long as the parties and the Court have adequate information in order to evaluate the relative position of the parties.”) (quotation marks and citation omitted); *Griffin v. Flagstar Bancorp, Inc.*, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 173702 (same).

Moreover, these negotiations were adversarial and conducted in the utmost good faith. “Courts presume the absence of fraud or collusion in class action settlements unless there is evidence to the contrary.” *Leonhardt v. ArvinMeritor, Inc.*, 581 F. Supp. 2d 818, 838 (E.D. Mich. 2008); *Bowers v. Windstream Ky. East, LLC*, Civil Action No. 3:09-CV-440-H, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 157242, at *5 (W.D. Ky. Nov. 1, 2013). There is nothing in the course of the negotiations or the substance of the settlement that “disclose[s] grounds to doubt its fairness.” *Manual* § 21.662 at 464.

II. The Proposed Settlement Classes Should Be Provisionally Certified Pursuant to Rule 23.

The Manual notes the propriety of certifying a class solely for purposes of settlement, *see Manual* § 21.32, and courts in this Circuit routinely provisionally approve a proposed settlement class before deciding plaintiffs’ motion for class certification. *See, e.g., In re Delphi Corp. Sec. Derivatives & ERISA Litig.*, 248 F.R.D. 483, 486 n. 2 (E.D. Mich. 2008) (granting final approval to both ERISA and Securities settlement classes, noting the court’s earlier, preliminary approval of the settlement classes granted prior to a hearing on defendants’ motions to dismiss); *Cardizem*, 218 F.R.D. at 516-17, 530 (granting final approval of proposed settlement, noting its earlier preliminary approval of both the proposed settlement class and the proposed settlement agreement granted prior to class certification and prior to hearing on motions to dismiss). A court may grant provisional certification where, as here, the proposed settlement class satisfies the four prerequisites of Rule 23(a) (numerosity, commonality, typicality and adequacy), as well as one of the three subsections of Rule 23(b). *See In re Packaged Ice Antitrust Litig.*, No. 08-MD-01952, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 140235, at *27-28 (E.D. Mich. Sept. 2, 2010).

While in the context of a litigated class certification motion, a trial court must conduct a “rigorous analysis” to confirm that the requirements of Rule 23 have been met, *Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes*, 131 S. Ct. 2541, 2551 (2011), even in that context “the requisite ‘rigorous analysis’ of the record and consideration of the merits must be focused on and limited to the question whether the Rule’s requirements have been established.” *Cason-Merenda v. VHS of Mich., Inc.*, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 131006, at *20-21 (E.D. Mich. Sept. 13, 2013) (citing *In re Whirlpool Corp. Front-Loading Washer Prods. Liab. Litig.*, 722 F.3d 838, 851-52 (6th Cir. 2013)). Permissible inquiry into the merits of plaintiffs’ claims at the class certification stage is limited:

Rule 23 grants courts no license to engage in free-ranging merits inquiries at the class certification stage. Merits questions may be considered to the extent—but

only to the extent—that they are relevant to determining whether the Rule 23 prerequisites for class certification are satisfied.

Amgen Inc. v. Conn. Ret. Plans & Trust Funds, 133 S. Ct. 1184, 1194-95 (2013) (“*Amgen*”) (citing *Dukes*, 131 S. Ct. at 2552 n.6). “In other words, district courts may not turn the class certification proceedings into a dress rehearsal for the trial on the merits.” *In re Whirlpool Corp.*, 722 F.3d 838, 851-52 (internal quotation marks and citation omitted). Here, as demonstrated below, even under a “rigorous analysis,” the requirements of Rule 23 are easily met.

A. The Proposed Settlement Classes Meet the Requirements of Rule 23(a).

Horizontal price fixing class actions are routinely certified by the Courts in this District and elsewhere. EPPs’ allegations of “a per se violation of the antitrust laws are exactly the kind of allegations which may be proven on a class-wide basis through common proof.” *In re Southeastern Milk Antitrust Litig.*, Master File No. 2:09-MD-1000, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 94223, at *35 (E.D. Tenn. Sept. 7, 2010). “Courts have held that the existence of a conspiracy is the predominant issue in price fixing cases, warranting certification of the class even where significant individual issues are present.” *Id.* at *33 (internal quotation marks and citations omitted). “As a rule of thumb, a price fixing antitrust conspiracy model is generally regarded as well suited for class treatment.” *In re Foundry Resins Antitrust Litig.*, 242 F.R.D. 393, 409 (S.D. Ohio 2007); *see also Hyland v. Homeservices of Am., Inc.*, Case No. 3:05-CV-612-R, 2008 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 90892, at *12 (W.D. Ky. Nov. 6, 2008).

i. The Proposed Settlement Classes Are So Numerous That It Is Impracticable to Bring All Class Members Before the Court.

No magic number is required to satisfy the numerosity requirement of Rule 23(a)(1). *Miller v. Univ. of Cincinnati*, 241 F.R.D. 285, 288 (S.D. Ohio 2006). A class representative need only show that joining all members of the potential class is extremely difficult or inconvenient. *Golden v. City of Columbus*, 404 F.3d 950, 965 (6th Cir. 2005). The “sheer number of potential litigants

in a class, especially if it is more than several hundred, can be the only factor needed to satisfy Rule 23(a)(1).” *In re Foundry Resins Antitrust Litig.*, 242 F.R.D. at 403 (citing *Bacon v. Honda of America Mfg., Inc.*, 370 F.3d 565, 570 (6th Cir. 2004)); *see also In re Am. Med. Sys., Inc.*, 75 F.3d 1069, 1079 (6th Cir. 1996).

Here, the proposed Settlement Classes consist of 1) all persons and entities who, from January 1, 2000 through the Execution Date of the Settlement Agreement between NSK and the EPPs, purchased or leased a new Vehicle in the United States not for resale which included Bearings as a component part or indirectly purchased one or more of these products as a replacement part and 2) all persons and entities who, from January 1, 2005 through the Execution Date of the Settlement Agreement between NSK and the EPPs, purchased or leased a new Vehicle in the United States not for resale which included Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies as a component part or indirectly purchased one or more of these products as a replacement part. Since then, it is beyond dispute that millions of persons and entities throughout the United States have purchased or leased vehicles containing Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies for personal use. As a result of the large number of putative class members and their geographic distribution throughout the United States, joinder is highly impractical – if not impossible.

ii. End-Payor Plaintiff Class Representatives and the Proposed Settlement Classes Share Common Legal and Factual Questions.

Commonality only requires that “there are questions of law or fact common to the class.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a)(2). While Rule 23(a)(2) speaks of questions of law or fact in the plural, “there need be only one common question to certify a class.” *In re Whirlpool Corp. Front-Loading Washer Prods. Liab. Litig.*, 722 F.3d at 853; *see also Cason-Merenda*, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 131006, at *22 (one common question of law or fact is sufficient); *Griffin v. Flagstar Bancorp*

Inc., 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 173702 (same); *Date v. Sony Elecs., Inc.*, Case No. 07-15474, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 108095, at *10 (E.D. Mich. July 31, 2013) (same).

This prerequisite is readily satisfied here because “antitrust price-fixing conspiracy cases, by their nature, deal with common legal and factual questions about the existence, scope and effect of the alleged conspiracy.” *In re Aluminum Phosphide Antitrust Litig.*, 160 F.R.D. 609, 613 (D. Kan. 1995). Thus, in price-fixing cases, courts “have consistently held that the very nature of a conspiracy in an antitrust action compels a finding that common questions of law and fact exist.” *In re Dynamic Random Access Memory (DRAM) Antitrust Litig.*, No. M 02-1486 PJH, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 39841 (N.D. Cal. June 5, 2006); *see also* Newberg § 3:10 at 278 (“[In an] antitrust action on behalf of purchasers who have bought defendants’ products at prices that have been maintained above competitive levels by unlawful conduct, the courts have held that the existence of an alleged conspiracy or monopoly is a common issue that will satisfy the Rule 23(a)(2) prerequisite”).

Here, EPPs have identified the following issues common to the proposed Settlement Classes:

- Whether Defendants engaged in combinations and conspiracies among themselves to fix, raise, maintain, or stabilize the prices of Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies sold in the United States;
- Whether Defendants engaged in combinations and conspiracies among themselves to rig bids quoted to customers of Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies sold in the United States;
- Whether Defendants engaged in combinations and conspiracies to allocate customers and the markets for Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies sold in the United States;
- The duration of the illegal conspiracy or conspiracies;
- Whether Defendants’ conduct resulted in unlawful overcharges on the prices of Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies; and

- Whether unlawful overcharges on the price of Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies, and if so, the appropriate measure of damages.

Any one of these substantive issues would, standing alone, establish the requisite commonality under Rule 23(a)(2).

iii. End-Payor Plaintiff Class Representatives' Claims Are Typical of the Claims of the Members of the Proposed Settlement Classes.

Third, Rule 23(a) requires typicality of the class representatives' claims. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a)(3). "The [typicality] requirement is not onerous," *Int'l Union, UAW v. Ford Motor Co.*, 2006 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 70471, at *54, and courts liberally construe it. *See In re Foundry Resins Antitrust Litig.*, 242 F.R.D. at 403. "In the antitrust context, typicality is established when the named plaintiffs and all class members allege[] the same antitrust violation by defendants." *Cason-Merenda*, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 131006, at *25 (quoting *In re Foundry Resins Antitrust Litig.*, 242 F.R.D. at 405); *see also Stout v. J.D. Byrider*, 228 F.3d 709, 717 (6th Cir. 2000); *In re Am. Med. Sys.*, 75 F.3d at 1082; *Packaged Ice*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255, at *40-41. "If there is a strong similarity of legal theories, the requirement [of typicality] is met, even if there are factual distinctions among named and absent class members." *Griffin v. Flagstar Bancorp, Inc.*, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 173702, at *17-18 (quotation marks and citation omitted); *Packaged Ice*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255, at *40 (same).

Because the End-Payor Plaintiff Class representatives and the members of the proposed Settlement Classes believe they are all victims of the conspiracies to fix prices, rig bids, and allocate the market and customers for Bearings and Electronic Powered Steering Assemblies and seek the same relief, Rule 23(a)(3) is satisfied. *See Cason-Merenda*, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 131006, at *26 (finding typicality met where "the claims of the named Plaintiffs and those of the remaining members of the proposed class all arise from the same conspiracy and are based on the

same theory of liability under the Sherman Act.”) (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)); *Packaged Ice*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255, at *40-41 (“Because all Class Members’ claims arise from . . . a conspiracy to allocate markets in violation of the Sherman Act, their claims are based on the same legal theory and the typicality requirement . . . is met”).

iv. Proposed Settlement Class Counsel and End-Payor Plaintiff Class Representatives Will Fairly and Adequately Protect the Interests of the Proposed Settlement Classes.

The final requirement of Rule 23(a) is that the representative parties “fairly and adequately protect the interests of the class.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(a)(4). The Sixth Circuit has articulated two criteria for determining adequacy of representation: “1) [t]he representative must have common interests with unnamed members of the class, and 2) it must appear that the representatives will vigorously prosecute the interests of the class through qualified counsel.” *In re Foundry Resins Antitrust Litig.*, 242 F.R.D. at 407 (quoting *Senter v. Gen. Motors Corp.*, 532 F.2d 511, 525 (6th Cir. 1976)). EPPs submit that there are no conflicts between them and the proposed Settlement Classes because EPPs and members of the proposed Settlement Classes: (i) purchased in the United States motor vehicles containing the relevant parts; and/or (ii) indirectly purchased the relevant parts, have the same interest in establishing liability, and all seek damages for the ensuing overcharge. *See In re Corrugated Container Antitrust Litig.*, 643 F.2d 195, 208 (5th Cir. 1981) (certifying settlement class and holding that “so long as all class members are united in asserting a common right, such as achieving the maximum possible recovery for the class, the class interests are not antagonistic for representation purposes” (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)). EPPs and the members of the proposed Settlement Classes also share a common interest in obtaining NSK’s substantial cooperation in prosecuting the claims against the non-settling Defendants.

Rule 23(g) requires the Court to examine the capabilities and resources of class counsel to determine whether they will provide adequate representation to the class. The proposed Settlement Classes are represented by counsel with extensive experience in antitrust and class action litigation. They have vigorously prosecuted the class claims, and they will continue to do so through all phases of the litigation, including trial. *See Marcus v. Dep't of Revenue*, 206 F.R.D. 509, 512 (D. Kan. 2002) (“In absence of evidence to the contrary, courts will presume the proposed class counsel is adequately competent to conduct the proposed litigation”). The Court appointed Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy, LLP, Robins Kaplan LLP, and Susman Godfrey L.L.P. as Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel in this action and the other automotive parts antitrust cases within Master File No. 2:12-md-2311. *See* Case Management Order No. 3 filed as ECF No. 271. For the same reasons that the Court appointed them to this position, it should appoint them Settlement Class Counsel here.

B. The Proposed Settlement Classes Meet the Requirements of Rule 23(b)(3).

To qualify for certification under Rule 23(b)(3), a class must meet two requirements beyond the Rule 23(a) prerequisites: common questions must predominate over any questions affecting only individual members; and class resolution must be superior to other available methods for the fair and efficient adjudication of the controversy. *Amchem Prods., Inc. v. Windsor*, 521 U.S. 591, 615 (1997) (“*Amchem*”); *see also In re Scrap Metal Antitrust Litig.*, 527 F.3d 517, 535 (6th Cir. 2008). With respect to both requirements, the Court need not inquire whether the “case, if tried, would present intractable management problems, for the proposal is that there be no trial.” *Amchem*, 521 U.S. at 620 (internal citations omitted).

i. Common Questions of Law and Fact Predominate.

“Rule 23(b)(3) does not mandate that a plaintiff seeking class certification prove that each element of the claim is susceptible to classwide proof.” *In re Whirlpool Corp.*, 722 F.3d at 859.

Instead, “[a] claim will meet the predominance requirement when there exists generalized evidence which proves or disproves an element on a simultaneous, class-wide basis, since such proof obviates the need to examine each class member’s individualized position.” *In re Foundry Resins Antitrust Litig.*, 242 F.R.D. at 408 (quoting *In re Cardizem CD Antitrust Litig.*, 200 F.R.D. at 307). Common questions need only predominate; they need not be dispositive of the litigation. *Id.* (citing *In re Potash Antitrust Litig.*, 159 F.R.D. 682, 693 (D. Minn. 1995)); cf. *In re Scrap Metal Antitrust Litig.*, 527 F.3d at 535-36 (holding issues regarding the amount of damages do not destroy predominance). “[T]he mere fact that questions peculiar to each individual member of the class action remain after the common questions of the defendant’s liability have been resolved does not dictate the conclusion that a class action is impermissible.” *Cason-Merenda v. VHS of Mich., Inc.*, 2013 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 131006, at *19-20 (quoting *Powers v. Hamilton Cnty. Public Defender Comm.*, 501 F.3d 595, 619 (6th Cir. 2007)). As pertinent to the EPPs’ request here to provisionally certify the proposed Settlement Classes under Rule 23(b)(3), the Supreme Court very recently instructed that “Rule 23(b)(3) requires a showing that *questions* common to the class predominate, not that those questions will be answered, on the merits, in favor of the class.” *Amgen*, 133 S.Ct. at 1191.

Because the EPPs allege conduct from which all proposed Settlement Class Members’ alleged injuries arise, issues common to the proposed Settlement Class Members—for example, the existence and scope of the alleged price-fixing conspiracy or conspiracies among Defendants, the market impact of Defendants’ conspiracy or conspiracies, and the aggregate amount of damage suffered by the class as a result of the alleged antitrust violations—predominate over any individual questions, and therefore class treatment of the claims is appropriate for purposes of this settlement. *See Amchem*, 521 U.S. at 625 (“Predominance is a test readily met in certain cases

alleging . . . violations of the antitrust laws.”); *see also In re Vitamins Antitrust Litig.*, 209 F.R.D. 251, 254 (D.D.C. 2002) (“[A]s a rule, the allegation of a price-fixing conspiracy is sufficient to establish predominance of common questions[.]”) (quoting NEWBERG ON CLASS ACTIONS § 18.28 at 18-98 (3d ed. 1992)). This Circuit has also held “[p]redominance is a test readily met in certain cases alleging . . . violations of the antitrust laws, because proof of the conspiracy is a common question that is thought to predominate over the other issues of the case.” *In re Scrap Metal Antitrust Litig.*, 527 F.3d at 535 (quoting *Amchem*, 521 U.S. at 625).⁴ Furthermore, here the evidence that will prove a violation as to one Settlement Class Member is common to the others and will be sufficient to prove it as to all—the anticompetitive conduct is not dependent on the separate conduct of the individual Settlement Class Members. *See Packaged Ice*, 2011 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 17255, at *43.

This is true even if there are individual state law issues, as long as the common issues still outweigh the individual ones; *e.g.*, as long as a common theory can be alleged as to liability and impact that can be pursued by the class. *See, e.g., In re Whirlpool Corp.*, 722 F.3d at 861 (“[I]t remains the ‘black letter rule’ that a class may obtain certification under Rule 23(b)(3) when liability questions common to the class predominate over damages questions unique to class members.” (internal quotation marks and citation omitted)); *Scrap Metal*, 527 F.3d at 535 (where common issues determine liability, fact that damages calculation may involve individualized

⁴ Other courts have recognized that the existence and scope of an alleged antitrust conspiracy are matters susceptible to class-wide proof, and thus tend to support a finding that common issues predominate over individual ones as to at least the first element of an antitrust conspiracy claim. *See, e.g., Cordes & Co. Financial Services, Inc. v. A.G. Edwards & Sons, Inc.*, 502 F.3d 91, 105 (2d Cir. 2007); *Blades v. Monsanto Co.*, 400 F.3d 562, 572 (8th Cir. 2005); *In re Blood Reagents Antitrust Litig.*, 283 F.R.D. 222, 234 (E.D. Pa. 2012); *Reed v. Advocate Health Care*, 268 F.R.D. 573, 581 (N.D. Ill. 2009); *In re Urethane Antitrust Litig.*, 251 F.R.D. 629, 634 (D. Kan. 2008); *Foundry Resins*, 242 F.R.D. at 408.

issues does not defeat predominance). Issues common to the proposed Settlement Classes predominate in these cases—all EPPs allegedly paid overcharges that were caused by the Defendants’ price-fixing activities. The presence of these common issues of liability and impact predominates over any individual issues and strongly support provisional certification of the proposed Settlement Classes.

ii. A Class Action is the Superior Method to Adjudicate These Claims.

Rule 23(b)(3) also requires that a class action be superior to other available methods of fairly adjudicating the controversy. The superiority of class certification over other available methods is measured by consideration of certain factors, including: the class members’ interests in controlling the prosecution of individual actions; the extent and nature of any litigation concerning the controversy already begun by or against class members; the desirability of concentrating the litigation of various claims in the particular forum; and the likely difficulties in managing a class action. *Dillworth v. Case Farms Processing, Inc.*, No. 5:08-cv-1694, 2010 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 20446 (N.D. Ohio Mar. 8, 2010).

Courts consistently hold that class actions are a superior method of resolving antitrust claims like those alleged here. *See In re Universal Serv. Fund Tel. Billing Practices Litig.*, 219 F.R.D. 661, 678 (D. Kan. 2004) (noting that individual litigation of antitrust claims would be “grossly inefficient, costly, and time consuming”). Here, the interests of Settlement Classes’ members in individually controlling the prosecution of separate claims are outweighed by the efficiency of the class mechanism. *Cardizem*, 200 F.R.D. at 325-26 (finding that class action is superior because it ensures fair and efficient adjudication). Untold numbers of Settlement Class members purchased vehicles containing the relevant parts as a component part or indirectly purchased the relevant parts as a replacement part for a Vehicle during the settlement class period; resolving these claims in the context of a class action would conserve both judicial and private resources and would hasten

the class members' recovery. *See, e.g., In re Foundry Resins*, 242 F.R.D. at 411-12 (“Repeatedly litigating the same issues in individual suits would produce duplicate efforts, unnecessarily increase litigation costs, impose an unwarranted burden on this Court and other courts, and create a risk of inconsistent results”).⁵

C. The Proposed Settlement Classes Meet the Requirements of Rule 23(b)(2).

If the requirements of Rule 23(a) are met, the Court may also certify a class under Rule 23(b)(2) where “the party opposing the class has acted or refused to act on grounds that apply generally to the class, so that final injunctive relief or corresponding declaratory relief is appropriate respecting the class as a whole . . .” Claims for non-monetary relief, like those asserted under state laws, including those states that do not recognize claims for money damages by indirect purchasers in antitrust actions, are properly certified under Rule 23(b)(2).

III. Notice to the Class Members.

Rule 23(c)(2)(B) requires the Court to “direct to class members the best notice that is practicable under the circumstances, including individual notice to all members who can be identified through reasonable effort.” With regard to class action claims that are settled, Rule 23(e) instructs courts to “direct notice in a reasonable manner to all class members who would be bound by the proposal.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(e)(1). “[D]ue process does not require actual notice, but rather a good faith effort to provide actual notice.” *Thacker*, 259 F.R.D. at 271-72. To comport with the requirements of due process, notice must be “reasonably calculated to reach interested parties.”

⁵ Another criterion of Rule 23(b)(3) is manageability. The Supreme Court has made clear that manageability need not be considered where, as here, a class is being certified for settlement purposes. *Amchem*, 521 U.S. at 620 (“Confronted with a request for settlement-only class certification, a district court need not inquire whether the case, if tried, would present intractable management problems, see Fed. R. Civ. P. 23(b)(3)(D), for the proposal is that there be no trial”).

Fidel v. Farley, 534 F.3d 508, 514 (6th Cir. 2008) (citing *Karkoukli's, Inc. v. Dohany*, 409 F.3d 279, 283 (6th Cir. 2005)).

Because it would be most cost-effective and efficient to disseminate notice of this settlement together with notice of other settlements, the parties have agreed to defer dissemination of notice. As set forth in the Settlement Agreement, “End-Payor Plaintiffs, at a time to be decided in their sole discretion, shall in each Action submit to the Court a motion for authorization to disseminate notice of the settlement and of this Agreement to all members of the Settlement Classes identified by End-Payor Plaintiffs (the “Notice Motions”).” Settlement Agreement ¶ 16. The Notice Motions shall include “a proposed form of, method for, and date of dissemination of notice in each Action.” *Id.* Accordingly, with the Court’s permission, proposed Settlement Class Counsel will submit a proposed motion for authorization to disseminate notice at a later date.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, EPPs respectfully request that the motion for preliminary approval be granted and that the Court enter the accompanying Proposed Order:

1. Preliminarily approving the Settlement Agreement;
2. Provisionally certifying the proposed Settlement Classes;
3. Staying the proceedings against NSK (as defined in the Settlement Agreement with the same) in accordance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement; and
4. Appointing Interim Co-Lead Class Counsel for the EPPs as Settlement Class Counsel for this settlement.

Date: July 28, 2016

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on July 28, 2016 I caused the foregoing END-PAYOR PLAINTIFFS' MEMORANDUM OF LAW IN SUPPORT OF END-PAYOR PLAINTIFFS' MOTION FOR PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF PROPOSED SETTLEMENT WITH NSK AND PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATION OF SETTLEMENT CLASSES to be electronically filed with the Clerk of the Court using the CM/ECF system, which will send notification of such filing to all counsel of record.

/s/ Steven N. Williams
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